



**Between Spaces: A Painterly Investigation of Uncertainty and  
Belonging through the House Museum**

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## Abstract

This project is driven by a personal preoccupation with the concept of home and how it can be represented through paintings. The fleeting, the glimpse, the uncertainty of belonging, loss, unease, yearning and hope are key concepts that have been investigated throughout the research. The research focuses on historic house museums as depictions of home that lie somewhere between reality and representation.

The house museums chosen for this project include Elizabeth Farm, Narryna, Runnymede, Clarendon and Franklin House, historic houses built between 1793 and 1840. These museums were chosen for their example of Georgian architectural style and personal association.

The aim of this research project is to produce paintings that evoke the intangible, the unseen, and the uncertain in relation to the house museum and the concepts of home that it can represent. Related to this key aim is an interest in depicting the simultaneous experience of presence and absence evident when visiting house museums. The research also responds to the tension between comfort and unease experienced in relation to home and the house museum and how these sensations can be evoked in paintings.

The contextual research has investigated the passing of time, nostalgia, loss and longing, alongside absence and presence, through key texts and artists working within the field of interiors, nostalgia and memory. This includes the writings of Gaston Bachelard, Alain de Botton, Edward E. Casey and Dylan Trigg, and the work of artists Anne Wallace, Jane Burton, Edward Hopper, and Vilhelm Hammershoi.

These key questions have guided my research:

- How can intangible concepts related to notions of home such as uncertainty, belonging, presence and absence be evoked in painting?
- How can paintings based on house museums allude to ambiguous and uncertain experiences without resorting to literal narrative devices?

Studio research progressed from exterior studies of houses in the landscape to studies of interior spaces, with historic house museums ultimately settled on as the most appropriate sites for the collection of source imagery. The house museum as a subject provided a consistent research site which can be returned to with the expectation of minimal change. This shift in subject matter moved the focus of research subject matter away from the specifics of a place toward being more focused on expressing the intangible and ambiguous.

The circle and ellipse as painting supports have been used with the intention to represent this ambiguity and to focus vision on selected aspects of the rooms. The shapes allude also to the peephole, the glimpse and the small and the intimate, while also referring to objects associated with domestic space such as mirrors and jewellery. These objects can trigger memories and be containers of memories, keepsakes, and surfaces which retain evidence of use.

The hang of the project for final submission is intended to create fluidity and openness in the reading of the work with the intention being to represent the transitory and fleeting nature of memory, the ambiguity of home in relation to the house museum and the psychological experience of being within the museum space.

The research outcomes revealed that paintings based on house museums can successfully represent uncertainty and belonging in relationship to home. The intentional cropping of the compositions inhibits the viewer from comprehending the entirety of the rooms depicted, adding to the feeling of uncertainty. The use of a small room space in the gallery to hang the work allows for peripheral vision of the works to be part of the experience of the work, further mimicking the ability of memory to be often fickle and difficult to grasp.



## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

A personal preoccupation with the concept of home and how this can be represented in paint provides the driving concept for this project. Ideas around the uncertainty of belonging, loss, unease, yearning and hope have occurred throughout my work for quite some time, and have informed this MFA research project.

The studio research for this project progressed from exterior studies of houses in the landscape to studies of interior spaces. This shift in subject matter moved my focus of research from the specifics of a place towards expressing the intangible and ambiguous presence that can occur within interior spaces. To this end, historic house museums became key as a consistent research site that can be revisited with the expectation of minimal change.

The house museums chosen for this project include Elizabeth Farm, Narryna, Runnymede, Clarendon and Franklin House, historic houses built between 1793 and 1840. These museums were chosen for their example of Georgian architectural style and personal association. This personal association will be expanded further in this chapter and in chapter 2. The house museum as exclusive subject, became the underpinning methodology to the project's research, providing a focus for both material collection and studio process.

In choosing to investigate the historic house museums of the Georgian era, the key theoretical concerns of, the passage of time, loss and longing, as well as absence and presence could be explored through spaces with rich historical layers and alignment with personal preoccupations. By using house museums from the early colonial era, I have investigated the intersection of memory, time and imagination – all of which are identifying features. The historical space of the house museum provided a place of plentiful nostalgic reference, its contents alluding to the presence and absence of occupants once there, and also to the

significance of interior spaces in the consideration of home, and what can begin to describe a sense of personal belonging.

Theoretical and contextual research includes theories of time and time passing, memory, nostalgia, and absence. The reference in my work to historical houses relates to a personal interest in historic architecture, my English ancestry, and the search for what home and belonging mean to me.

As someone who has moved away from the place where I grew up, I acknowledge that much of this project is driven by a personal search for home. A combination of a romantic idea of what home is and the explicit connection of the idea of home to traditional house architecture has led me to seek out Australian Colonial Georgian houses as visual references.

Colonial Georgian architecture has a simplicity and symmetry which appeals to the ‘ideal’ and often childlike conception of the image of a home, which can be understood as romantic. These houses also contain a sense of history, the passage of time and the lives of those who lived there. The colonial settlers brought elements from their homelands to create a more familiar space – such as architectural styles, plants and animals – to create a sense of home. This yearning and searching for a sense of home in the face of such different, and at times difficult, circumstances adds to the romanticism of these spaces and a particular description of what home can mean.

The strong personal connections that can be forged over time to the places we live in can imbue these structures with a strong sense of history, and thus the intangible sense of past lives can be resonant in houses, especially those from a bygone era. I have been interested in investigating the intersection between what is known, what is experienced, what is felt and what can be imagined in these spaces in relation to who lived there in the past and how this can affect an experience and understanding of a place. The house museum can be seen as sitting in

this intersection of knowledge: neither real nor unreal, the house museum is a combination of reality and imagination.

My personal attachment to the English-style Georgian house is something that has been long-held. Possibly this attraction has more to do with a childhood memory and sense of security in the London houses of my first year and a half of life. The reasons I have these seemingly mysterious connections to certain styles and aesthetics might, therefore, have something to do with my own first experiences of home, and early memories of houses visited in childhood. This early experience of home is often associated with feelings of happiness and security.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes of the childhood home as “our first universe, and our corner of the world” (1969, p. 4), and notes that, “We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection” (p. 6). It could be said that we pursue this experience in an adult search for home, and that it can engender a longing for the home of the past. In addition to this, I have investigated the significance of particular architectural styles, which can be seen as inspiring and encouraging these emotions, and which link in with my own personal experience of home.

In *The Architecture of Happiness*, Alain de Botton discusses the ability of architecture to add to and take away feelings of happiness. He cites specific examples of Western architecture, such as the Royal Crescent, Bath, 1775, designed by John Wood the Younger (2006, p. 147), and the Doge’s Palace in Venice, 1340-1420 (p. 187), as having such qualities of beauty, order, and symmetry as to bring some to tears. This sensation of both melancholy and happiness in the presence of beauty is one he relates to the experience of looking at great works of art. This concept of both positive and negative emotions being experienced at the

same time links to the sensations of comfort and unease which can be experienced in relation to home, and to uncertainty, as discussed in the next section.

## **Key Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this research project is to investigate the intangible, the unseen, and the uncertain in relation to the house and ideas of home. Within this key aim, the project also investigates presence and absence, the main objective of the research being to investigate this tension between comfort and unease and how this experience and sensation can be rendered in paint.

These key questions have guided my research:

- How can intangible concepts related to notions of home such as uncertainty, belonging, presence and absence be evoked in painting?
- How can paintings based on house museums allude to ambiguous and uncertain experiences without resorting to literal narrative devices?

## **Key terms and definitions**

Throughout the exegesis, particular key words and concepts are discussed and defined as follows:

- **memory** in relation to place (Trigg 2012, p. 9) and personal experiences of memory such as those from childhood;
- the **house** in relation to the home as discussed by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1994, p. 3);
- the **romantic** idea of home in relation to a personal connection to the formality of historic architecture, particularly Georgian architecture and comfort, as discussed in Witold Rybczynski *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1986, p. 121);

- *presence and absence* in relation to physically inhabiting domestic space, and the continuing sense of these inhabitants as attached to furnishings, and the wear and tear visible on furniture in spaces that have been empty for quite some time;
- *belonging* in terms of an emotional attachment to a place that has been lived in;
- *loss* as experienced in the change of home and location of home over the course of a life; and
- *ambiguous* and *intangible* in terms of the memories mentioned above and the emotions associated with an experience of home.

These key terms relate directly to my research questions and to the main aims and objectives and are used throughout this exegesis to describe the focus of the work and the intended outcomes.

The house museum has become the key vehicle for the project, serving as both a source of imagery and a physical manifestation of the ideas driving the research. As a static site from which to work, the house museum offers the opportunity to study spaces and return to the space several times. Neither current home nor recently occupied, the house museum can be seen as a space that exists between house and home. The exhibits attempt to give an impression of how the home once was, relying on traces of information left behind. The spaces remain ambiguous, temporal and fragile, yet fixed and unchanging in their role as a museum space. This unique position of the house museum makes it an ideal focus for research for this project, with the possibility for further investigation for future projects.

### **Structure of the exegesis**

Chapter 2 combines theoretical and artistic context to locate this project in the field. Chapter 3 explores the studio strategies and output, while Chapter 4 discusses the final body of work and how the outcomes of research have addressed the key aims and objectives.

Theoretical and contextual research discussed in Chapter 2 includes theories of time and time passing, sight and memory, nostalgia, melancholy and absence. Key texts include the writings of Alain de Botton, Gaston Bachelard, Witold Rybczynski, Edward Casey and Dylan Trigg. Contextual artists determined to be relevant to the project include painters Anne Wallace, Edward Hopper, Vilhelm Hammershøi, and photographer Jane Burton. These artists have been chosen for their influence in conceptual ideas, technique and compositional strategies.

Key studio methods and the trajectory of the project are discussed in relation to the studio research. Key strategies employed within the studio include: the shape of the support; the momentum of the mark and the time used to create the paintings; the quality of the edge; the tension between the limitation of colour and tonal palette; and the quality of the painted surface.

Circular and elliptical painting supports have been used with the specific intention of creating a sense of focus and narrowed vision, where only some aspects of the room or space are revealed. The shapes allude also to the peephole, the glimpse, and the small and the intimate. These shapes are often also used for jewellery, such as brooches and locket – objects that are worn on the body, often as keepsakes and containers of memory.

The concluding chapter provides an overview of the project, including the significant changes in its progression and decisions made. The outcomes of the submitted body of work are discussed in relation to the key research questions, and future work beyond the project is also discussed.

## **Chapter 2 Theoretical and Contextual Field of Research**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first, *The House and Home*, discusses the theoretical writings of Alain de Botton, Gaston Bachelard and Witold Rybczynski in relation to architectural theory; how home is defined and how it affects us emotionally; the associations that can be made with particular architectural styles; and why the house can be such a powerful symbol. The second section, *Spaces and Memory*, explores theories surrounding memory and, in particular, memories of the lived-in space, and references the writings of Edward Casey and Dylan Trigg. The third section, *Nostalgia and the House Museum*, discusses the selection of reference material for the project and how this informs the content and imagery within the work.

Within these three sections, a comprehensive analysis of selected works of artists relevant to the project are discussed, including: Jane Burton's series *Ivy* (2009), Anne Wallace's series *The Next Room* (1999), Edward Hopper's Paris interiors (1906), and Vilhelm Hammershøi's works of Strandgade 30, Copenhagen, (1899-1909). This provides a description of a focused field of artistic practice in which this project can be situated, alongside key theoretical concerns.

### **The House and Home**

The house is an ideal subject to express the key ideas of uncertainty and belonging which have become the drivers of this project. The house is a structure that is intrinsically familiar and can be reassuringly consistent in what it represents: the possibility of security, of comfort, of reassurance and refuge, and a trigger for memories of our own past. In *The Architecture of Happiness*, Alain de Botton writes of home and our relationship to it in his

thorough survey of architecture and its effects on our lives. He characterises the house as an integral part of who we are and what it means to be human. De Botton proposes that there is great significance to the myriad styles of architecture that have been designed and developed over the centuries, describing how they have contributed to our individual and collective consciousness. As De Botton writes:

Our love of home is in turn an acknowledgment of the degree to which our identity is not self-determined. We need a home in the psychological sense as much as we need one in the physical; to compensate for vulnerability. We need a refuge to shore up our states of mind, because so much of the world is opposed to our allegiances. We need our rooms to align us to desirable versions of ourselves and to keep alive the important, evanescent sides of us (2006, p. 107).

At the beginning of this project, the empty and abandoned house was a key focus for representations of the passing of time, of loss, and of absence and presence simultaneously. This investigation led me to looking at the house museum as a space that, while no longer lived in, gives an interpretation of the past and how it was inhabited. The spaces, which are static and easily accessible, have provided valuable source imagery on which to base the paintings for this research.

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* provides insight into the house and its powerful effect on the formation of memories. Bachelard writes:

For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable onerism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the onerically definitive house, must retain its shadows (1958, p. 13).



This “retaining of shadows” is a concept I have explored in the project, alongside the idea of the concealed, the hidden, and the undefined – spaces that are ambiguous, psychologically loaded, and open to interpretation; spaces that are quiet yet imbued with the presence of past inhabitants. Bachelard proposes that the houses of childhood, in particular, hold great significance in our consciousness, as these houses become part of our daydreaming, imagining and remembering, and are linked to a personal idea of home in the subconscious that can be carried throughout life (1958, p. 13).

In *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Witold Rybczynski surveys the evolution of, and changing attitudes to, the home and house in conjunction with architectural changes and developments of the last two centuries. The chapter *Ease*, in which he discusses the Georgian style and the concept of comfort, is of particular relevance to my research. The interior design of the Georgian house is discussed with attention to the relationship of the Georgian interior to the lives of quiet and ease that the wealthy were able to enjoy. There is an emphasis on the division between public and private spaces and the way in which the architecture reflected this. Rybczynski points out that it was at this time that individual bedrooms were first assigned to all occupants, giving both privacy and spaces for people to relax in solitude. Rybczynski writes how “The continued attractiveness of the Georgian interior is no accident of fashion. It typified a period that combined domesticity, elegance, and comfort more successfully than ever before, or, many have argued, since.” (1986 p. 104)

Rybczynski’s explanation of the appeal of the Georgian house gives me some insight into the reasons for my consistent return to it as subject matter. It carries an aura of promise, of comfort, and security – elements that make up a personal quest for home and a desire to live in a space that gives a sense of belonging.

In his description of the painting *Interior with a Woman Playing the Virginals* (c.1660) by Dutch painter Emanuel de Witte, Rybczynski also speaks of the distinction between a house and a home as evident in de Witte's painting:

The rooms are illuminated to emphasise their depth and distance, as well as their physical, material reality. It is above all this sense of interior space, and hence of insideness, that distinguishes this painting. Instead of the painting simply being a picture of a room, it is a picture of a home (1986, p. 70)

This “picture of a home” can be linked to the house museum as reference: the museum is dedicated to representing the “home” of those who lived there, not just interior scenes of a particular era. In using these spaces as my reference, my work is inevitably informed by this personal connection and trace of individual experience within spaces.

Danish painter Vilhelm Hammershøi took the house and the interior of a home as key subject matter in his work. Active in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hammershøi painted interior scenes almost exclusively of his own home, an apartment in Copenhagen, Denmark. Hammershøi's studies of rooms can be seen to offer a representation of silence, stillness and light. Created by the subdued colour palette, the concentration on a natural light source and even paint application gives a sense of calmness and quietness (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Hammershøi V, 1900, *Sunbeams*, oil on canvas, 70 x 59 cm

*Interior, Strandgade 30* (Figure 2) gives a view through one room into another and then another through an open doorway. The series of open doorways allows light to filter through, creating deep shadows in each subsequent space. The pale panels are minimally decorated, giving an impression of overall simplicity. The lines of the grey-green of the floorboards guide the viewer's eye through to the next space, and then on to the far windows, and the light beyond the last door.



Figure 2. Hammershøi V, 1901, *Interior, Strandgade 30*, oil on panel, 66 x 65 cm.

The figure in the second room is almost lost amongst the shadows and is only noticed on close observation of the painting. The repetition of doors and windows leads the eye from space to space, while the chair in the room could refer to time spent there, possibly waiting, resting or just sitting reading.

The house can also be used as a metaphor for comfort and security. As Bachelard writes, “With the example of the hut and the light that keeps vigil on the horizon, we have shown the concentration of intimacy in refuge, in its most simplified form” (1958, p. 37). Bachelard writes of the potential for comfort and security when the possibility for shelter is seen ahead. It could be said that the interior scene can also inspire similar emotions, especially when seen

repeatedly, as with Hammershøi's works. This repetition is discussed as a studio strategy in Chapter 3, on methodology.

## **Spaces and Memory**

A key objective of this project is to describe memory in relation to interior space. Key here is the ambiguity and transient nature of memory and the shifting effect it has on our perception of time. In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Edward Casey speaks of spatial memory as having particular characteristics of “clustering, compressing, and gappiness” (1987, pp. 71-72), with the result that the memories associated with space, and in particular the home space, are often focused on one space which can then represent the entire building. For example, a specific set of stairs which is remembered from a childhood home can contain in that one space the distilled memories of the whole house. He writes that, “There seems to be a factor of economy, sometimes to the point of elegance, in this compressing of several locales into a single privileged place of enactment” (p. 72).

Casey proposes that this condensing leads to gaps in spatial memory. This theory supports my decision to focus on particular details of rooms and spaces, rather than depicting the whole room or space. By focusing on specific details, such as window frames and corners, to represent this characteristic of spatial memory, I hope to suggest in my paintings that these are spaces remembered, rather than spaces observed.

In *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, Dylan Trigg examines memory in relation to place in the context of the experience of place as felt through the body, mind and spirit. Investigating memory and its many layers through linking themes of childhood, dreams, haunting, trauma and anxiety, he focuses on the significance of memory and of place as an embodied experience that is felt physically and emotionally.

The fixed nature of the house museum attempts to recreate the past at a particular place and time. Trigg writes of this aspect of memory – and its relevance to illuminating a broader human experience of time and the past – suggesting that:

Clearly memory persists in some sense into the present. Once lived, the past does not temporarily expire, even though the event itself may have ceased to exist. Instead it stretches out into the present, resonating in such a way that personal identity and collective identity become reinforced (2012, p. 47).

The resonance that Trigg speaks of here can be aligned with the concept of an unseen presence and, in particular, the haunting of houses. Trigg examines haunting and the haunted, in the context of place and, specifically, the haunted house as a place that resonates significantly in memory (p. 308). In relation to the context of this project, it is the sense of the presence of those who have inhabited these spaces that I am attempting to describe. The concept outlined above, of the past continuing into the present, is evident in how certain spaces seem to hold these traces more than others, perhaps due to the physical layers of the structure such as wallpaper, furnishings, and areas that have had consistent wearing, such as steps, corridors and window frames.

These spaces are ones of transition, outside to inside, room to room, exiting and entering. These threshold spaces can represent a turning point, a shift in time, a change in point of view. It is for this reason that the threshold or doorway is an image which has been used throughout the project.

Casey also suggests that a dwelling is a link and intermediate space between the body and the earth and that, by building and creating an interior world, we create a space that can be returned to, cultivated in memory and resided in, in a way that transient spaces cannot. The house is a personal space, an intimate one, and one which can house our imagination and

desires, the core values of life and the stories within that life. Casey further expands on the significance of place and memory as connected to bodily experience: “Body memory establishes the familiarity that is requisite to the full realisation of place memory” (1987, p. 193).

Casey discusses this concept further in his book *Getting Back into Place*, where he writes of the “intimate isolation of the home” and “being bodily in-built places” (1993, p. 179). He suggests that it is this bodily “being in” and habitual actions performed over time that makes certain places a home to us. He discusses all the varied spaces and places that dwellings can be. From a simple hut to a grand mansion, the elements which make a home are the same – shelter, familiarity and security – and there must be some permanency in structure and a consistency of spaces.

The shared elements provide a space to define ourselves and are thus linked to identity. Possibly this is why the house as a symbol is so powerful; it is intrinsically linked to the formation of personal identity and therefore a way to place oneself in society and the world. The use of the house or dwelling space as subject matter thus triggers links to emotions and ideas that can be deeply etched in memory and a powerful symbol of where we have been and where we are going.

Australian painter Anne Wallace uses domestic spaces to suggest the uncanny. Her paintings of single figures within rooms, and of rooms without figures, have deep shadows that are enhanced by strong, often contrasting colour and lack of detail in the painted surface. In Wallace’s work *Study*, the viewpoint is angled towards the ceiling, suggesting that the only view available is from very low (Figure 3), preventing the viewer from being able to apprehend what is happening outside of this view. The light from the window is cold, bright and glary;

the blue walls and simple, white Venetian blinds could imply an institutional setting, such as a hospital ward or a doctor's surgery.



Figure 3. Wallace, A, 2000, *Study*, oil on canvas

Similar Venetian blinds reappear in the series *The Next Room (c)* (Figure 4), which concentrates on the details of a room. (It is unclear whether the same room is depicted in each painting.) This concentration on the details of a room – a door, a bed, a window and corner – provides some information about what might be happening but does not reveal all. Writing about the use of the cinematic frame and film-still in creating a form of narrative in Wallace's work, George Petelin suggests that:



We are led to identify with each picture's point of view but not to attain it. This is not then simply a matter of placing ourselves at the omniscient monocular position of the perspectival eye. We have to place ourselves into a picture from which there is no escape. (2000, n.p.).

This denial to the viewer of what is beyond the picture plane adds to the feeling of the uncanny in Wallace's work, and is enhanced by her use of blue-grey shadows, strong light sources, and softened edges of painted areas of colour. The yellow ochre of the bed cover in *The Next Room (c)* (Figure 4) against the white of the pillow and dark blackness of the bedhead creates an uncomfortable feeling due to the harsh contrast and sickly colour choice for a place of rest. The contrast is dramatic. The rich colour and soft brush strokes are purposeful in what they choose to describe and to omit, adding to the tension that the whole series creates in a narrative when seen together. The narrative is not complete: there are many gaps in information, gaps that create tension and ambiguity.



Figure 4. Wallace, A, 1999, *The Next Room (c)*, oil on canvas

Wallace's lone figures in near-empty rooms could be taking inspiration from Edward Hopper's interior works, and his paintings of interiors of rooms and buildings lit dramatically at dawn or dusk. The incomplete narrative again comes into play where Hopper's chosen images allude to scenarios, but do not specifically describe them in detail. His interior images speak of concerns of absence, as well as longing and spaces dwelt in – the spaces of residence and human shelter. Despite this evidence of human residence in Hopper's works, there appears to be an emptiness created by the angle of human poses and gazes, the deep shadows, harsh sunlight and bright colours which heighten reality. Avis Berman writes of this mood Hopper creates:

Hopper had a remarkable ability to invest the most ordinary scene—whether at a roadside gas pump, a nondescript diner or a bleak hotel room—with intense mystery, creating narratives that no viewer can ever quite unravel. His frozen and isolated figures often seem awkwardly drawn and posed, but he eschewed making them appear too graceful or showy, which he felt would be false to the mood he sought to establish (2007, n.p.).

In Hopper's *Stairway at 48 rue de Lille, Paris* (Figure 5), the light falling on surfaces is indicated by soft brushstrokes on the edges of the bannister, stair treads and door's surface, and the use of many shades of grey and brown. The muted colour allows the light shining on surfaces to stand out, giving the general feeling of gloom in the space.



Figure 5. Hopper, E, 1906, *Stairway at 48 rue de Lille, Paris*, oil on wood, 33 x 23.5 cm

The transitional, threshold space—discussed earlier in the chapter and referred to by Edward Casey as the “familiar” (1993, p. 191) and the often-used spaces within buildings—is painted here by Hopper in a way that alludes to a mundane, yet not inconsequential, space in a building. These often-overlooked spaces, corners, and stairways may contain more emotional sentiment and the ability to trigger memory and inspire imagination than other, less frequently used spaces. This is something Hopper exploits in this work.

Art critic Annie Proulx writes that Hopper’s interest in films derived from his early work as a graphic artist, noting that, “He began to do magazine illustrations for *System*, the *Magazine of Business*, his frequent subject office interiors. He could hardly guess he was laying groundwork for future paintings. He also did movie posters, the beginning of his long love affair with films” (2004, n.p.). This staircase represents the transition from the bustling city

outside into to his studio and living space, most likely used every day during Hopper's visit to Paris in 1906, where, at the age of 24, he resided at 48 rue de Lille.

This space might have inspired feelings of relief, boredom, and distance from home, and of potential and excitement in somewhere new; the conflicting emotions that can be experienced when away from familiar surroundings. As Kimberly Dovey argues, home is “an ordering principle in space and is a place of security within an insecure world” (1985, n.p.). Away from this “home”, Hopper might have felt insecure in the new surrounding and a foreign country. Considering this, and Hopper's situation when this work was painted, it could appear to be a simple image of an unremarkable staircase in a Paris apartment building. But this image could also be considered as recording more than just architectural details and light falling on polished timber; it portrays, perhaps, his feelings experienced while away from home.

The act of observing a space and recording its atmosphere and details can also capture an emotional state in relation to home and leaving home. In *House as A Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home*, Clare Cooper Marcus writes of “domophobia”—a fear of domesticity (1995, p. 92). This fear, she suggests, relates to a situation in which a person undertakes “a compulsive flight from domesticity” (p. 92). Furthermore, she describes the feeling of always needing to leave home, as well as the idea that tangible objects and spaces may provide a more reliable source of support than human relationships (p. 92). This paradoxical notion refers to the idea that, by leaving the home you have spent considerable time in, you might end up finding what home really means to you. The idea of leaving to find is not an uncommon or new and is eloquently described by TS Eliot in his poem *Little Gidding*: “We shall not cease from exploration. And at the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we are started. And know the place for the first time” (1942, n.p.).

## Nostalgia and the House Museum

In researching the description of historical spaces as a representation of home, nostalgia has come to be an important aspect of the research. Another way of describing longing, pain for home, and revelling in past details, nostalgia can be linked to a negative emotion of “homesickness” but is also commonly used to describe “a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). When tracking its etymology, nostalgia is defined as “(in the sense ‘acute homesickness’) [from the] modern Latin (translating German *Heimweh* ‘homesickness’), from Greek *nostos* ‘return home’ + *algos* ‘pain’” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). Nostalgia can thus be seen to possess both positive and negative connotations.

Paolo Magagnoli proposes that nostalgia is an “ideological distortion” (2011, p.100) and that it can also be intrinsically lacking in fact. As Magagnoli writes that “nostalgia is frequently defined as the opposite of history, or what is considered a well-documented account of the past” (p.100). This meaning of nostalgia can be usefully applied to house museums and the construction of rooms to fit the known and documented accounts of the past, which can often be based on a general idea of how a time and place existed, and some supposition of actual scenes based on what evidence is left to study. As Nuala Hancock writes, “A house museum is a vessel full of the associations of the other. It is both solid object and repository of memory. It offers the tangible facts of a person’s life and intimate encounters with the nuanced sensibilities of their being in the world” (2011, p.14).

The house museums at Narryna, Runnymede and Elizabeth Farm are all in the Colonial Georgian style, sharing common features such as large windows, thick stone walls and symmetrical elements to their design. Rybczynski writes of the Georgian architectural style that, “There is something extremely appealing about the Georgian interior... It is this potent

combination, perhaps, that accounts for the continued attraction of the Georgian interior; the idea that comfort should include not only visual delight and physical wellbeing, but also usefulness” (1986, p. 120).

My responses and imaginings are linked to my personal romantic and aesthetic interests, formed over years of visiting such houses, and becoming familiar with their architectural details – the symmetry of their facades, the simplicity of room layout, and beauty in the consistent stylistic details of moulded decorative cornices, grand doorways and large sash windows often built into thick walls which often allowed for seats or cupboards to be built into their width.

The solidity of the materials used in Georgian houses, and in particular the characteristic symmetrical façade, gives me a feeling of security and comfort, linked to my romantic ideas of how a life lived behind the windows might have been. Rybczynski also writes that, “The continued attractiveness of the Georgian interior is no accident of fashion. It typified a period that combined domesticity, elegance, and comfort more successfully than ever before, or, many have argued, since” (1986 p. 104). The qualities of a particular style of architecture is also touched up on by Alain de Botton, who writes that, “We value certain buildings for their ability to rebalance our misshapen natures and encourage emotions which our predominant commitments force us to sacrifice” (2006, p. 121). The rebalancing of the mind proposed by de Botton, in the spaces that give us pleasure and a sense of clarity, is one that interests and motivates my decision to pursue this line of inquiry and research. De Botton reveals and makes connections with certain architectural styles in creating this balance, something I experience in Georgian interiors:

Imagine a man ... sitting in the waiting room of a Georgian townhouse before a meeting. Uninterested in the magazines on offer, he looks up at the ceiling and

recognises that at some point in the eighteenth century, someone took the trouble to design a complicated but harmonious moulding (2006, pp.149-150).

My personal recollections of being physically inside these houses are strong, as experienced like the man in the quote above, through thoughts that the spaces inspire in relation to the occupants of the spaces and how they lived within those spaces. My experience of being bodily in a space of home is, for example, often affected by the size of the room – small and cosy or large and light-filled, liberating, and calming, scale has deeply affected my experience in spaces.

The house museum presents a contradiction in that people who possess this memory are no longer dwelling in the location. Curators, such as those at the Sydney Living Museums, which include several houses and buildings in New South Wales, work to present this “memory” and preserve it. Elizabeth Farm, at Parramatta in Sydney, was a starting point for research, as described by curator Dr Scott Hill:

With its deep, shady verandas and elegant symmetry, Elizabeth Farm is an iconic early colonial bungalow. Begun in 1793, it was extended and modified over the next 35 years for John and Elizabeth Macarthur, best known as pioneers of the Australian wool industry (2018, n.p.).

The representation of home in the house museums explored within this project provided an idea of home in early colonial times, in Tasmania, through interior decoration, furniture and objects sourced or preserved from the contents of the houses. For example, Narryna House Museum in Hobart is managed by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Its website encourages visitors to “Step into Narryna for a rich experience of early colonial life” (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery 2018, n.p.). Narryna concentrates on the Colonial

Georgian era in its interiors and contents, rather than a particular family who resided there, as is the case with Elizabeth Farm.

What is fascinating in respect to the house museum is the space between what is known and what is imagined, or the gaps that are filled in by knowledge of other examples from houses of a similar era. Therefore, the curators must rely on what has been left behind by past residents, such as newspapers and diaries, to piece together an idea of how the past residents lived their lives. There are always gaps and spaces in what was recorded and what has survived. These gaps and spaces are important to this research project as it is driven by a desire to investigate the spaces between what is revealed and what is not, and the sense of nostalgia that these fragments of information suggest.

Australian photographic artist Jane Burton captures this sense of nostalgia through her use of nostalgic imagery as subject matter, such as buildings of aged appearance, that allude to dwellings, such as houses or small cottages (Figures 6 & 7). The nostalgic aspect of this imagery is achieved using sepia toning, edges vignettted with shadows, and aged, well-used buildings that have features from historic architectural styles.

Ashley Crawford suggests that the “world of Jane Burton’s photography is a morass of mystery, nostalgia, potential threat, sense of place, spirituality and sexuality; a world of dread and desire, beauty and melancholia” (2004, n.p.).





Figure 6. Burton J, 2011, *La Bête #4*, pigment print on paper, 40 x 54 cm

Crawford describes Burton's process of image selection:

an obsessive key to Burton's work is the location chosen. She prowls suburbia, seeking out empty houses, peering through lace curtains, a voyeur of emptiness, seeking a stage for her tableaux. Alternatively, she drives the coast and country, camera at the ready to capture a stark tree, a looming rock, an abandoned car, a violent wave (2004, n.p.).

A sense of uncertainty is created by the use of one colour tone, such as dark sepia, which creates a cinematic quality in Burton's monochromatic compositions. These may take inspiration from the black and white of the film noir film-still, with their emphasis on shadows and darkness. As Burton explains, "I admire directors who have a strong visual style and are adept at creating mood and atmosphere. The power of the film-still, narrative, atmosphere, emotion can be contained within this frozen moment, suggesting far more, something beyond the frame. Cinema beautifully manipulates" (quoted in Crawford 2004, n.p.)

The suggestion of something beyond the frame, through the cropping and manipulation of the image, increases the nostalgic effect. This sense of the uncanny is defined by Dylan Trigg as “an effect, a felt experience that disturbs the body, resulting in a departure from the everyday” (2012, p. 27). Trigg speaks of the distortion of reality and the perceivable sense of haunting in certain places; for example, “the object of haunting is not menacing in its lurking distance, but disturbing in its familiarity, albeit in an augmented form” (p. 289). Burton’s use of cinematic reference, and the subsequent atmosphere created by this, can lead the viewer into an experience of the uncertain and the uncanny.



Figure 7. Burton, J, 2009, *Ivy 01*, pigment print on paper, 75 x 89 cm

In my paintings for this project, I decided to use limited colour in a similar way to increase this sense of the uncanny and to further imbue the images with a nostalgic sense. This exclusion of representational colour is a key methodology which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Conclusion**

The three areas of philosophical and contextual enquiry explored here—the house and home; spaces and memory; and nostalgia and the house museum—provided a base on which to focus my research. The writings of de Botton, Casey, Trigg and Rybczynski have provided evidence of the significance of architecture, place and the uncanny in relation to how home and the house are experienced, while artists Hammershøi, Hopper, Wallace and Burton have been influential in providing the field in which to situate this project.

The project is underpinned by this theoretical inquiry, which has been influential in the development of studio-based strategies and methodologies. The methodologies developed through studio research will be addressed in the next chapter alongside an account of the trajectory of the project, and the discoveries and research which led to the decisions made for the final conclusion of the work.

## **Chapter 3 Studio methods**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the studio methods pursued over the duration of this project. The first section is a chronological account of the key discoveries and shifts in my studio development. There has been a significant shift and refining of processes with each new site: Bothwell involved working from vista and external view; Patterdale consolidated the shift to interior and intimate spaces and Elizabeth Farm was significant in exploring the tension between the real and imagined; and ultimately, in choosing to focus on house museums, I have been able to develop key strategies and methods that support and promote the project's aims. I have made clear decisions on such things as the shape of the support, the momentum of the mark, the quality of the edge, the tension between the limitation of colour and tonality of the palette, and the quality of surface, which I discuss in this chapter through an analysis of key works. In the conclusion of this chapter, I discuss the final works and the rationales behind the proposed hang for the installation of this project.

### **Bothwell - House in the Landscape**

The starting point for this project was an abandoned house in Bothwell. This historic town in the Tasmanian Midlands is a compelling mix of functional, living community and the lingering presence of the past. I was initially drawn to a particular house (Figures 8 & 9) because of the ambiguity of whether it was still inhabited. As consequence, I only took photographs from the exterior.



Figure 8. Jones, B, *Bothwell April 2016*, digital photograph



Figure 9. Jones, B, *It Once Was*, 2016, oil on canvas, 61 x 61 cm



My first studies in the studio were a fairly literal painterly translation of these photographs and a direct continuation of my previous work. On reflection, this continuation was not expanding on and clearly addressing the research questions proposed in the project, and so I delved deeper into my motivations and core drivers behind the questions I was proposing and what strategies might respond to them most effectively. The exterior views remained distant, both in the sense of being physically distant and in how they described the emotions I wished to express. The houses were closed, the interiors hidden, access denied and meaning ambiguous. The next significant shift came about through a visit to Sydney and the house museums there, particularly Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta.

### **Elizabeth Farm - Tension between Recollection and Reality**

Having first visited this site as a child, Elizabeth Farm offered me the opportunity to analyse the tension between the memory of place and the reality of revisiting the site as part of this research. The contrast between experiences of past and present led to a reflection on scale and questions around the accuracy of memories. I remembered Elizabeth Farm being larger, and recall being able to touch old letters and objects (which I likely was not allowed to do). This new visit revealed a friction between childhood memory and my experience as an adult, and a pondering of differences between what is recollected and what is reality, sparking an interest in exploring this aspect of memory in the studio work. These considerations provided a starting point for new investigations.

Photographs taken on this visit to Elizabeth Farm concentrated on the interior. This had always been the most compelling aspect of the site for me, as it provides the most vivid insight into the lives lived within the house. The work produced as a result made a significant shift in terms of using a limited depth of field when taking the photographs, and the ways in which the images were cropped. Cropping restricted the view to small sections of the room, with the

viewpoint becoming narrower and more focused on details such as a corner, doorway, window or corridor (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Jones, B, *Within Four Walls*, 2016, oil on canvas, 13 x 13 cm (each)

These works allude to an unseen space beyond the picture frame, fragmented moments of a memory of time and experience, and a slippage between what is imagined as having existed in these spaces and the reality, early memories and present experience. I chose to depict doorways and windows to suggest a space beyond and a glimpse into a room, rather than a broad view of the space.

My paint application became looser and less descriptive and, by cropping the composition to a more limited viewpoint, I hoped to create a sense of ambiguity. It was at this time that I began to use doorways, windows, and corridors as focus points for the paintings. These transitional spaces allow the possible space beyond the picture frame to become as important as the one seen clearly, the highlight of detail and focus being on this transitional feature of architecture.

## **Patterdale – Layers of Time**

In the works created after a visit to Patterdale,<sup>1</sup> the shift to interiors of houses as the exclusive subject matter for the project was confirmed. I quickly decided to concentrate on the interior of the house and, due to time constraints (I was only able to visit once), the photographic evidence gathered needed to be intentional and focused on this interior.

Works created in this series began to attempt to describe the tangible experience of time passing, the layers of history seen in paint and wallpaper remnants, and the trace of human contact in the spaces. I chose detailed sections of the interior to paint these different surfaces and layers, the raw stone walls and patches of wallpaper uncovered in the restoration process, window ledges, where hands would have touched frequently in daily actions of opening and closing windows, and a mantelpiece (Figure 11), where candle sticks and possibly other objects would have been placed on display.

This shift revealed a life once lived in the space – a home rather than simply a house – and the traces of past lives lived there is evident in the wear and tear of surfaces. The paintings I produced at this time included both small and larger-sized works together and saw the introduction of the scatter hang as an installation strategy. The decision to include different sized works tested how scale could affect the reading of the work, with the smaller works inviting closer inspection, the larger ones giving more information about the space.

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<sup>1</sup> Located at Deddington in Northern Tasmania, Patterdale (built 1832) was the residence of colonial landscape painter, John Glover (1767-1849).





Figure 11. Jones, B, *Dust and Light*, 2017, oil on canvas, 61 x 61 cm

### **The House Museum – Containers of Memory**

The Patterdale series and works from Elizabeth Farm led to the significant decision to restrict reference photographs to the house museum only. The house museums chosen to provide a convenient and consistent resource that can be returned to. It is designed to preserve and protect the past, and to provide a glimpse into how life might have been lived at the time. The rooms remain static and unchanged, capturing a moment in time, and allowing an opportunity to be a “fly on the wall” in another’s life. This element of voyeurism underpins my continuing attraction to historical houses. I am drawn to these museums for the romantic ideals they perpetuate: lives lived in beautiful rooms and the idea of a quiet, simple and peaceful life before the industrial age took full effect. They offer a unique space that lies between reality and artificiality. They are no longer occupied as they once were, but are preserved and frozen in time, rooms and spaces set up as they might have once looked.

This decision thus links to the key aims and concerns of the project: expressing through paint, longing, loss, grief and yearning, absence, presence and the transitory nature of memory. After this decision to concentrate the research on house museums, the sites of research were confined to Narryna and Runnymede House in Hobart, Clarendon House and Franklin House in Northern Tasmania, and Elizabeth Farm in Sydney. I began a new series of works to explore these sites as a test for this transition in research subject matter.

### **Test Series – Intimate Spaces of the House Museum**



Figure 12. Jones, B, *Settling In*, 2018, oil on canvas, 15 x 15 cm (each)

In the test series, *Settling In*, which used these museums as exclusive reference, I began to get closer to expressing the key aims of the project: depicting memory, and the emotions of longing, belonging and yearning associated with the idea of home. However, these paintings become formulaic and predictable in their composition and colour palette and were overly constrained in painterly technique, due in part to the use of a small brush and the regular and uniform nature of the support. This series lost the ambiguity and tension found in the work made after the Elizabeth Farm visit. The linear installation, combined with the consistency of shape and size, further enhanced the predictable nature of the work. Further experimentation was required to find a support that better aligned with the desires of the project.

The images continued to be more representational than emotive, due to minimal manipulation of the source photographs, with colours and tone sought directly from the printed image, but I could see some success in being able to create something more effective through including several paintings rather than a stand-alone work. Moreover, my analysis of this test installation prompted me to question the relationship between the application of the paint and the communication of my ideas. Through this failed series (Figure5), the next significant shift in practice came about, and a refinement of key strategies resulted from an analysis of the inadequacies of this body of work and its installation.

### **Shape of the Support – The Significance of the Circle and Ellipse**



Figure 13. Jones, B, Studio test, 2018, oil on wood panels, 50 cm and 20 cm

Following the test series, the nature of the support became a priority in studio investigations. The shift to circular wooden panels was more closely aligned to the aims and objectives of the project and resonated with the feminine and the domestic as curves, mirrors,

embroidery hoops, oval portrait frames and jewellery such as locket and small pendants can all be associated with these shapes. Possibly linked to feelings of longing, loss, the keepsake, and the precious objects that can be worn on the body, these shapes can be linked to a desire to capture a moment and the memory of a time or person. The small scale of the works invites closer inspection and a more intimate experience, while the size of the panels (similar to mirrors) also alludes to an image being reflected, or indeed the notion of reflection in respect of memory.

In painting the first of the wooden panels, I used a time limit of one hour for each to begin to free up brush work, with the aim of capturing a sense of the fleeting and momentary. These time-limited works contain an urgency and momentum in the paint application that was not evident in the more labour-intensive small canvas works. I deliberately left the edges unfinished, revealing the wooden surface and the underpainting colour, so that the overall effect is one of an unresolved image (Figure 14). This alludes to the uncertainty of memory, an



uncertainty I felt at Elizabeth Farm through the recollection of my first childhood visit there, and the way that the experience of the site changed during the second visit as an adult.

Figure 14. Jones, B, *Time Test*, 2018, oil on wood, 17 x 25 cm

The use of a time limit also forced me to shift away from relying on the photograph and trying to accurately represent it in paint. By being more gestural and loose in mark making, the

paintings began to get closer to describing an intangible and fleeting moment and give a sense of the urgency associated with capturing a memory or moment quickly and vividly.

### **Colour – Limiting the Palette**

Following my decision to limit the time to produce each painting to encourage a looser way of working, I experimented with converting source photographs to black and white in order to concentrate on light and tone without the distraction of trying to replicate colours. I restricted my palette to two to three colours, working on enhancing the contrast between light and dark, the tonal range and illusion of depth in the empty pictorial space simply, yet convincingly.

By removing naturalistic colour, the warmth and life is also stripped from the images. This enhances the distance and a feeling of the passage of time, and alludes to the patina of age, like a sepia-toned photograph which seems to have an aura of longing and nostalgia through its limited colour.

In these works, I decided to use a colour for the underpainting that would contrast with the colour layered on top to create a visual tension and vibration (Figure 15). The restricted tonal range also gives an increased sensitivity to the emotions of loss, longing, grief and death, in the lack of colour variation, and the life that can be seen to be leached out of the image.



Figure 15. Jones, B, *Small Ellipse*, 2019, oil on plywood, 12 x 22 cm

### **Surface - The Ephemeral and Transient**

With the shift to wooden panels, I began a sketchier approach to paint application, using thin layers of paint while the surfaces became more matte, giving an ephemeral quality to the image as if it could just slide off the surface. Devoid of sheen and absorbing the light, the surface also alludes to the patina of age, of history and of a space not lived in recently. By leaving the edges deliberately unresolved, the image appears to lack substance and solidity.

The dustiness suggested by the matte surface is not dissimilar to the static nature of the house, museum where dust collects readily, while the monochromatic palette references black and white or sepia-toned photographs, redolent with a sense of nostalgia and a yearning for times that were different from the present day, the past times that the house museum attempts to represent.

## Repetition – Spaces Reimagined

Another strategy that has emerged in the work has been that of repetition. The same source image has been used more than once, as has the same room or view. This device was also used by Vilhelm Hammershøi in his repeated return to his apartment in Copenhagen. The repetition of the same view in Hammershøi's works creates a base for intrigue and a reimagining of spaces, hinting at something beyond the visual – literally hiding a part of the scene or room that cannot be seen in the cropped images. Fragments of the same space and glimpses of a part of a room can create uncertainty as we wonder what is beyond the edge of the image.

Two of the circular works I produced depict the same window from different angles. The view is oblique, with a view to the garden that we are barely able to make out. Much of the image is in deep shadow: this negative, empty space adds to the sense of uncertainty in the image. This uncertainty also lies in the large proportion of empty space in the images; beyond what is lit from the bright light through the window is all in deep shadow, shadow that could contain anything within it (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Jones, B, *Circles*, 2019, oil on plywood, 20 cm

## **The Gallery Hang**

The hang of an entire body of work for final submission was chosen with the intention of representing the transitory nature of memory, and the shifting nature of our emotions in relation to this over time. The intentional fragmentation of the images by hanging them unevenly, with space in between, disrupts the line of view and causes the viewer's eye to move around, much as my eye did when I was in the rooms depicted.

The gaps between the panels align with incompleteness and uncertainty, the non-linear hang allowing a movement around the paintings and building various impressions and narratives in a way that a linear hang does not. The physical engagement with the work is one of toing and froing, not limited to left to right, but changeable in direction.

Hanging the paintings within a small room, allows for peripheral vision to play a part in the experience of the work. The use of the corners in relationship to how the work is hung mimics and reflects the corners depicted in the work. Consideration of the repetition in the imagery of the paintings influenced the hanging of the works in terms of lines of view that made a connection between these repetitions, such as the repetition of the 'bedroom scene' on both the entrance wall and the far interior wall of the room used. The clustering of works in groups provided a way to make further links between paintings that shared similar colour palette and enhanced each individual work by proximity to another. These groupings were intended to unify the body of work within the hanging space, hoping to create a sense of an immersive experience, rather than one of looking at individual works.





Figure 17. Jones, B, test install, 2019, oil on plywood, various sizes.

## Conclusion

There have been several key turning points in the evolution of the project. The restriction of the sites to reference to the house museum led to a clarification of the core methodology for the project, to describe feelings of loss, absence and uncertainty. The strategies discovered in the studio through the different series of works – initially houses in the landscape, the series created from Patterdale, the *Settling in* series, and finally the works on wooden panels and the works for submission – have developed in conjunction with this shift in subject matter.

Key strategies discovered during the project have influenced the production of works that successfully achieve the project aims. These include the shape of the support, the use of a limited colour palette, the loose painterly technique, the use of repetition of images, and the nature of the hang of final works.

The initial investigations within the studio gave me more insight into what was not working in terms of getting closer to answering the research questions. Subsequent site visits, and the revisit to Elizabeth Farm, provided a crucial shift in methodological approach as it confirmed the focus would be on interior spaces. The outcomes and final conclusions from this research are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4 Conclusion

The research focus of this project has shifted as the project developed, starting with the historic house in the landscape and colonial buildings with a certain nostalgic atmosphere. Some of the new paths of inquiry have resulted from circumstantial discoveries, such as the abandoned house in Bothwell highlighting the use of the absence of inhabitants to create a sense of the uncanny; some have been through more focused, practical studio research.

This absence of human presence was investigated further in the house museums and the questions of ambiguity, uncertainty, the intangible and the unseen addressed through key decisions around paint application, the shape of the supports, and the choice of a limited colour palette. The contextual research added depth, knowledge and expanded ideas about the role of architecture and the psychological aspects of the house and the effect of certain interiors and spaces on experience.

Memory and the nature of the uncanny were explored through the writings of Gaston Bachelard, Edward Casey and Dylan Trigg, which elaborate on the relationship of memory to place, childhood experience, and the role of the home within the key themes of the house, spaces and the house museum. Concentrating on historical house museums focused the research and the imagery, narrowing the perspective of the project and enabling the key aims to be explored in a more targeted way.

My decision to concentrate on the interiors of these museums further added to the pursuit of the aims and objectives. The selection and cropping of reference photographs revealed the significance of often-overlooked details and their ability to reflect the key concerns of memory, the unseen and the ambiguous. The shifts in scale and quick capturing of small spaces were used to enhance the fleeting aspect of memory.

The shift from stretched canvas to specifically cut wooden panels in circular and elliptical shapes was another significant shift towards producing of the final body of work. These curved shapes aligned more with the objectives by having direct associations to domestic spaces and a nostalgic reference to mirror shapes and jewellery such as locket and brooches. The project gained renewed purpose and strength in this shift, with decisions on paint application and the limitation of time for each painting further working towards the creation of works that respond to the project's objectives.

The non-linear hang of the entire body of work for final submission is intended to suggest the transitory nature of memory, of ideas and experiences of home, and the shifting nature of our emotions in relation to this over time. The final hang in one room was decided after a test hang in a space within the Plimsoll Gallery.

Whereas I initially planned to hang the works on one large wall, the use of a smaller room as a contained space allows for the interplay between the corners and viewing the work in a more intimate way. The room reflects the interiors that are the basis of the paintings, with the viewer positioned in such a way that each panel could be a peephole into a room beyond the wall, or even a mirror reflecting what was once in the space.

This final body of work successfully addresses the research questions posed at the beginning of the project. The first question, "How can intangible concepts related to notions of home such as uncertainty, belonging, presence and absence be evoked in painting?" is expressed through the imagery used and the repetition of the same room, the use of a limited palette and the cropping of the images. In looking at the entire body of work, a complete picture of a room is never described, thus further expressing a sense of uncertainty, in the way that much is left unseen and unknown. The second question, "How can paintings based on house museums allude to ambiguous and uncertain experiences without resorting to literal narrative

devices?” is addressed through a simultaneous evocation of a sense of absence and presence that can be seen in the works through the inclusion of furniture, particularly chairs and seats that show evidence of use. It can also be seen in the non-linear hang of the work, the blurring of some sections of paint to represent the unfocused nature of memory, and the circular and elliptical forms of the works which suggests more organic ideas and experience.

In works that look through a window, the viewpoint positions the viewer as if they were standing in the room looking out. This implies a presence and at the same time an absence, as there are no figures seen in the paintings. In looking at notions of absence and presence in relation to the house museum, the paintings can be read as static spaces. The repetition of the same spaces refers also to the multiple visits to the museums and the fact that the scenes remain the same on each visit, the repetition possibly showing the rooms at different times of day or year.

The space in between the paintings behaves like the space between memories, with the larger spaces around the smaller pieces accentuating the focus on the detail in the painting. It draws the eye into the painting, inviting closer inspection. At the same time, the cluster/scatter hang causes the eye to jump from one image to another in a random way, also adding to a feeling of uncertainty. The decision to hang the paintings on all four walls also engages peripheral vision, with the viewer surrounded by the images.

This studio-based research project evolved gradually, becoming clearer and more developed through greater inquiry, and the search for depth and purpose to the work. It has been a journey that has, at times, been difficult and confusing, inspiring and challenging. I have come to see and be able to express the key drivers of my work through this project, and to refine and extend my skills to achieve my goals. It leaves room for further study into the house museum and other aspects of home, human experience and interior spaces, and expansion on

the possibilities of expressing the key ideas of uncertainty, ambiguity, absence and presence within new spaces and new histories.

## Appendices

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## CV

### Bronwen Jones

#### Academic Qualifications

- 2015 Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours, University of Tasmania, Hobart.
- 2001 Master of Teaching (Visual Arts), University of Sydney.
- 1999 Bachelor of Visual Arts, University of Sydney.
- 1996 Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, Kingston University, U.K.

#### Solo Exhibitions

- 2014 *Towards north*, Inka Gallery Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart
- 2011 *vivid past*, Stable Gallery Cooley's Hotel Moonah Hobart
- 2010 *Gathering Time*, Red Wall Gallery Hobart
- 2009 *Quiet Light*, Top Gallery Salamanca Arts Centre Hobart

#### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2018 Finalist: The Henry Jones Art Hotel Emerging Artist Art prize
- 2018 *Travelling Home*, Entrepot Gallery, School of Creative Arts Hobart
- 2017 *Forget me not*, Sidespace Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart
- 2017 *House Show*, Constance ARI, Hobart
- 2017 *Glover in Arcadia*, Rosny Barn, Hobart
- 2016 Finalist: The Glover Prize, Falls Park Pavilion, Evandale
- 2013 *Osmosis*, Long Gallery Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart
- 2013 *Towards the Sun: Pure Gold*, Rosny School House Gallery, Hobart
- 2010 *Ginestrelle A.I.R. Artists in Residence 2010-2011*, Assisi 'Sala Pinacoteca', Italy

#### Residencies

- 2014 Studio Internazionale di Grafica, Venice, Italy
- 2010 Ginestrelle A.I.R. Santa Maria di Lignano Assisi, Italy